

Home fires

*One Wife's Call to Faithfulness,
Sacrifice, and Joy in Ministry*



MALLY HAM



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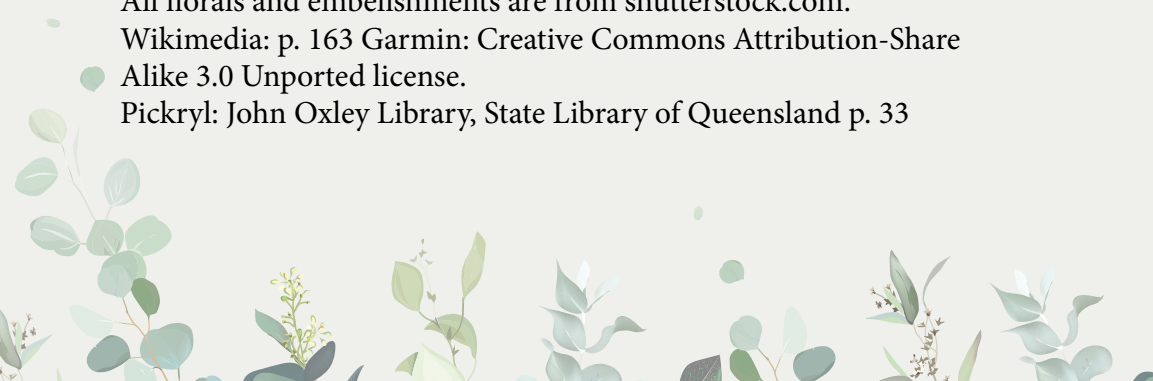
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What others are saying

“*Home Fires* is an extremely delightful and encouraging book by Mally Ham. She shares about God’s incredible faithfulness in her life and draws the reader in with precious family stories, including her and Ken’s beautiful love story. Her trust in God and reverence for His Word are inspirational, and the wisdom and advice she offers are priceless!”

*Emcal “E.Z.” Zwayne, President of Living Waters
Rachel Zwayne, Founder of Joyful Mothers*



“We truly relate to so much of what you’ve shared about your family and your ministry ... Mally’s writing is so honest and down-to-earth, and it’s inspiring to see how faithfully God has cared for her and Ken in every situation.”

Ray and Sue Comfort, Founders of Living Waters



“This book is replete with biblically sound counsel for women doing ministry alongside their husbands. Mally ignores the low-hanging fruit and concentrates on the root: marital oneness in ministry ... Her words are genuine, authentic, relevant, timeless, and helpful, always pointing us back to the truth of God’s Word.”

*Bridget Baucham,
Wife of the late Voddie Baucham*



“Pull up a chair and let Mally tell you about the great things the Lord has done as she introduces you to herself, her ‘Kenny,’ and the work at Answers in Genesis. In this book, you’ll get a backstage view of an ordinary couple with an extraordinary passion to serve Christ.”

Joel and Mary Beeke, Grand Rapids, Michigan



“This inspiring read is a must-have for anyone looking to strengthen their home and marriage through unique circumstances by holding fast to biblical truths.”

*Mr. and Mrs. Barry “Butch” Wilmore,
U.S. Navy Captain (Ret.) and NASA astronaut*

Foreword

Finishing Well

By Heidi St. John. Wife, Mother, and Grandmother, Bestselling Author, Speaker, and Podcaster

In a world that often celebrates the loud, the visible, and the instantly viral, Mally Ham stands as a quiet *treasure*—a woman whose life whispers the beautiful truth that God delights in using the ordinary, the shy, and the unseen to accomplish the extraordinary.

I love Mally Ham. She’s the real deal—and in the pages that follow, I have a feeling you will come to see her, like Ken does, as the “real” VIP at Answers in Genesis. It is a profound honor to introduce this book, not merely as a chronicle of one of the most influential ministries of our time, but as a heartfelt invitation into the beautiful, faithful partnership between Mally and her beloved “Kenny Darling,” the man God used to launch Answers in Genesis.

Mally will insist that she’s not an author—but I disagree. Avery writes Mally’s story beautifully, but God is the one who deserves the credit for what you are about to read.

In the pages ahead, you’ll see for yourself how Mally does far more than recount history. She opens her heart to teach timeless biblical truths on parenting, marriage, and faithfulness in ministry, while gently calling every reader (and reminding herself!) to finish well. This is not a book for spectators; it is a roadmap for those who long to walk humbly with their God, trusting that He who began a good work will be faithful to complete it.

Mally’s story is woven into the very fabric of Answers in Genesis from its earliest days. What began as a simple obedience to God’s call—Ken stepping out in faith to defend the authority of Scripture in a culture increasingly hostile to biblical truth—quickly grew

into a global movement. The Creation Museum, the Ark Encounter, and the countless lives transformed through AiG's resources stand today as visible testimonies. Yet, behind every public victory was Mally's steadfast, often invisible support. She never sought the spotlight. In fact, as she shares so vulnerably in these pages, Mally is by nature very shy. She never saw herself as part of a ministry that would one day impact millions. If someone had told her in those early Australian days that her quiet faithfulness would help shape a work reaching the ends of the earth, she admits she "would have run a million miles." How like our God, who delights in choosing the weak things of the world to confound the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27). Mally managed the home front, homeschooled their five children, poured herself into raising them to love and trust God's Word, and even helped run the early bookstore operations that supported the fledgling ministry. While Ken traveled and spoke, Mally was the anchor—praying, encouraging, and modeling the kind of behind-the-scenes devotion that true ministry requires.

This book tenderly chronicles their marriage, a love story that began in Brisbane, Australia, on December 30, 1972, and has now spanned more than fifty years. I was privileged to travel with Ken and Mally in Australia as part of the "Gospel Reset" tour. Seeing their relationship first-hand was a real treat—and an adventure. Ken and Mally took Jay and me on a "Ham Family History Tour," showing us the train they used to take together, the home that housed the cockroach-infested books, and even the marina where Ken asked Mally if she would like "seven ice creams." Ken still remembers what Mally was wearing at the church where they first met. When we drove by that spot, it occurred to me that a love like theirs is rare these days. Mally describes Ken perfectly in the book – his humor, his tendency to panic, and his great love for the gospel. But my favorite part of our time in Australia, aside from the time we spent with these precious friends, was simply watching Ken and Mally interact with each other.

Mally refers to Ken as "Kenny Darling" with a real spark in her eyes. She does not sugarcoat the challenges they have faced, either—the long separations, the spiritual battles, the weight of raising a family

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while building a ministry from scratch. Instead, she points us to the only foundation that holds: a shared commitment to God's Word as the absolute authority. In an age when marriages crumble under pressure and families drift from biblical moorings, Mally's testimony is a lifeline. She reminds us that marriage is not about two perfect people, but two imperfect people committed to a perfect Savior.

Throughout these pages, Mally teaches biblical truths on parenting with the gentle authority of a mother who has walked the path. She and Ken raised their children not with the latest secular techniques, but by saturating their hearts with Scripture. They modeled what it looks like to trust God's design for the family even when the culture mocked it. And they have reaped the blessing of children who grew to serve the Lord themselves. As Psalm 127:3-5 declares, "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!" Mally shows us that children are not interruptions to ministry; they are part of God's strategy for it. Her practical wisdom—drawn from years of late-night talks, homeschool lessons, and family devotions—will equip parents to disciple the next generation with purpose and confidence.

I am so thankful that Mally also shares her insights on faithfulness in ministry, calling us to something deeper than results or recognition. She reminds us that "Christians are different from the world," because in God's economy, obedience is more important than results. Whether your service is on a stage before thousands or in the quiet of your living room with toddlers at your feet, faithfulness matters to God. She addresses directly those who may feel discouraged right now—the man or woman whose quiet, unseen faithfulness seems to be producing no fruit.

Perhaps you serve in obscurity: teaching Sunday school, supporting your spouse's calling, praying faithfully for a wayward child, or simply keeping your home as a sanctuary of truth in a chaotic world. You wonder if anyone notices. You worry that your efforts are in vain. Take heart, dear one. Mally's life is living proof that God sees. Your quiet faithfulness is never wasted. Just as He multiplied

Mally's shy obedience into a ministry that now proclaims the gospel of creation and redemption to millions, He can multiply yours. Remember the words of Scripture in 1 Corinthians 4:2: "Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." (NKJV) Faithfulness is not measured by the size of the platform but by the size of our surrender. And in Matthew 25:21, the Master says to the faithful servant, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master."

Your unseen labor today is storing up eternal reward. God is not finished with you.

Mally also weaves in rich biblical teaching on marriage that will refresh every reader. Ephesians 5:22-25 paints a beautiful picture: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord . . . Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Mally and her Kenny Darling lived this out—not perfectly, but persistently. Their story reminds us that marriage is a living parable of the gospel. In a culture that redefines love on its own terms, Mally calls us back to covenant faithfulness, sacrificial love, and the joy of growing old together in the Lord.

The final challenge of this book is one we all need to hear: finish well. Mally looks back over decades of ministry and family life, urging us not to grow weary in doing good. Drawing from 2 Timothy 4:7, which says, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith," she reminds us that the race is not won at the starting line but at the finish. Whether you are in the early years of marriage and parenting or looking back on a lifetime of service, Mally's words will stir you to press on with renewed hope. God is faithful. He who called you is able to keep you.

As you turn these pages, you will laugh, you will cry, and most of all, you will be pointed again and again to the Lord Jesus Christ, the true hero of every story. Mally Ham has given us a gift: not just the history of Answers in Genesis, but a living example of what it means to walk by faith, love your husband and family with all your heart, raise arrows for the Kingdom, and remain faithful in the small

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things so God can entrust you with the great. To the shy, the quiet, the seemingly ordinary—your life matters. Your faithfulness is seen by the One who matters most. And He is using it in ways you cannot yet imagine.

May this book stir your heart, as it did mine, to greater devotion, deeper love, and unwavering faithfulness.

Thank you, Ken and Mally Ham, for your faithfulness in every area of your life. I am honored to call you my friends—and, by God's grace, may we all **finish well**.



Preface

“ I want to make an admission up front: I am not a writer or a speaker.

I am a follower of Jesus and a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. The Lord has brought me on a unique journey from my childhood to where I am now, supporting my husband in the ministry God called us both to, which impacts millions around the world.

There is so much I want to share about how God has guided me over the years and what He has taught me, but the Lord didn't gift me with the ability to express myself well in writing. I feel a bit like Moses, who felt insecure about speaking, so God brought Aaron along to do that for him. I praise the Lord that God brought Answers in Genesis' speaker and writer, Avery Foley, to help tell my story and write it down in my own words as much as possible. Thank you, Avery, for making me look so good as a writer.

I am here throughout the book, but Avery's writing ability has certainly enabled me to tell my story in a way that can be published for others to read and, hopefully, be encouraged and challenged.

My prayer is that this book will impact the lives of many, especially women in their role as their husband's helpmeet. May this book also highlight the vital importance of older women teaching and guiding younger women as we strive to be the godly wife, mother, and grandmother that God desires us to be.

— Mally

Introduction:

A Woman Who Feels the Lord

By Ken Ham, one of the founders of Answers in Genesis, the Creation Museum, and the Ark Encounter, and husband of Mally Ham

If you were to go back to 1968, the year Mally turned 15, and visit her in 10th grade, you would see a very timid and quiet young girl sitting in a public school, perhaps in a typing class. If you were to ask the teachers and students to vote on who would be the least likely to travel around the world, move to live in America, be an integral part of an organization that impacts tens of millions of people a year, and write a book (that I believe will be very popular), I think it would have been a unanimous vote — Mally Gow (now Mally Ham).

And if you were to go back two more years, to 1966, the year I turned 15, to visit my 10th-grade class in public school and ask for a vote on the same questions, I think you would have received another unanimous answer — Ken Ham.

To me, that's a reminder that only God truly knows each one of us, our hearts, and the talents and abilities He has entrusted to us:

☪ God knows you.

*O LORD, you have searched me and known me!
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.
— Psalm 139:1–4*

☪ God gives you gifts.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith. — Romans 12:6

☪ God calls you to use them.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. — Ephesians 2:10

Mally and I have often said that 1 Corinthians 1:27–29 speaks about people like us:

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

I was a science teacher in a public school, and Mally was a teller in a bank. But God was preparing us from before we were born to be involved in pioneering a ministry that would impact tens of millions around the world, and we pray, many millions more into the future.

If you asked a professional business person what kind of people, with what sort of qualifications, would be needed to pioneer an organization—one that would publish books and curricula, produce videos, speak at conferences, start a school (Answers Academy), respond to radio and TV interviews, grow to a large organization with hundreds of staff, and found the world’s two leading Christian themed attractions — I do not believe the answer would be, “Oh, you need a public school science teacher and a bank teller from Australia.”

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God uses ordinary people to do things others consider extraordinary! This is certainly what you see in the pages of Scripture.

God gave Mally the servant's heart she needed to become an integral part of enabling the ministry of Answers in Genesis to become what it is today. God also knew that Mally had committed to go anywhere and do anything God wanted and had determined to put God first, others second, and herself last throughout this life.

You know, we can only see the “outside” of a person. We can see what their training and qualifications are and see examples of their work. Although all that's very important, we can't see someone's heart — but God can!

But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” — 1 Samuel 16:7

Often when I come home or walk into a room, I hear Mally on the phone counseling one of our children or grandchildren, encouraging them, and reminding them to trust the Lord moment by moment. Our children and grandchildren adore her. And so do I!

As of the writing of this book, we have been married more than 50 years. I certainly know Mally and understand her — not that any man can truly understand how a woman thinks!

I never cease to be amazed at how God took a very shy, insecure, easily intimidated young girl from Australia and chose her to be my helpmeet and become such a vital part of enabling the creation apologetics ministry of Answers in Genesis to become a reality and flourish. I sincerely mean this — the ministry would not be where it is today if God had not brought Mally into my life. It might not even exist.

As I read Proverbs 31:10–31, I think it describes Mally. In this book, you are going to meet her, get to know her, and, I believe, learn

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a lot from what God has enabled her to experience and come to understand about living out the Christian faith in a fallen world.

*An excellent wife who can find?
She is far more precious than jewels.
The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.
She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.
She seeks wool and flax,
and works with willing hands.
She is like the ships of the merchant;
she brings her food from afar.
She rises while it is yet night
and provides food for her household
and portions for her maidens.
She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.
She dresses herself with strength
and makes her arms strong.
She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.
Her lamp does not go out at night.
She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her hands hold the spindle.
She opens her hand to the poor
and reaches out her hands to the needy.
She is not afraid of snow for her household,
for all her household are clothed in scarlet.
She makes bed coverings for herself;
her clothing is fine linen and purple.
Her husband is known in the gates
when he sits among the elders of the land.
She makes linen garments and sells them;
she delivers sashes to the merchant.*

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*Strength and dignity are her clothing,
and she laughs at the time to come.
She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.
She looks well to the ways of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.
Her children rise up and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:
“Many women have done excellently,
but you surpass them all.”
Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.
Give her of the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the gates.*

ONE

*The Power of a Flannelgraph:
A Call That Sustains Me*



*“Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them,
for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” — Matthew 19:14*



Home Fires

In those days, you went to Sunday school. It was just "the done thing."

My whole childhood was spent in Sunnybank, an apt name for a place bathed in sunshine most of the year. In the 1950s (I was born in 1953), this Aussie suburb on the edge of the coastal city of Brisbane, Australia, felt more like a country township than a suburb. Really, it was a semi-rural farming district, with dairy farms, orchards (oranges, lemons, mangoes, and more), and vegetable market gardens. I especially remember the custard apple and paw paw (papaya) trees — such yummy fruits!

In summer, the air was hot and humid. Vivid sunny mornings would give way to sudden downpours and intense thunderstorms that would spend themselves as quickly as they came, leaving earthy puddles in their wake. But mostly, it was hot and sticky until the autumn weather arrived with its long, clear mornings and golden afternoons.

Our winters were mild, with the gentle smell of eucalyptus drifting in from the nearby bushland and cool early mornings. November, the last month of spring on the continent, brought with it an explosion of lavender blossoms from the jacaranda trees that flourished in the area. And then it was summer again. And again, it was hot and humid.



Mally and parents

I loved riding with my uncle north of Brisbane to the Sunshine Coast, where I could see my favorite mountains, the Glass House Mountains. We loved walking in the rainforests of the Great Dividing Range, which runs from the fertile coastal areas of the east to the drier, desert areas of the west. My parents didn't own a car until closer to my teenage years, but public transport is big in Australia, so we could visit the seaside areas by train.

With no television set — or even an indoor bathroom — during my early childhood, days were spent in simple pleasures: roaming the fields, staring up at the blue sky and imagining shapes in the drifting clouds, taking turns riding the bike I shared with my younger sister, or practicing daily at the family piano.

A Growing Family

My earliest memory is toddling over humps of grass in the fields on the way to Grandma's dairy farm to see my favorite little brown Jersey, Buttercup. Stumbling over another clump of rich red sod, I'd think, *My goodness, this is a long way!* To my mother, her arms full of my baby sister, Christine, it was just "down the way a bit." To my chubby toddler legs, it was an epic journey, but I was always rewarded with time spent with Grandma, looking over the fence at her dairy cows.

Christine was just sixteen months younger than I, and we did everything together. When I was seven, the family grew to five with the birth of my brother, Robert, named for my father, Robert Charles. Dad, who was half-Chinese, was thrilled to have a son, and little Robert could do no wrong. Christine and I had to sit quietly at the dinner table, but Robert could play the family clown and get away with it every time. We girls didn't dare try his goofball antics!

Two years later, we welcomed another sister, little Michelle, and our family was complete.

Dad was a chef at an exclusive club. He worked in town during the week, and on weekends, he would cater weddings to earn some



extra income our family needed. As soon as we were able, my sister Christine and I became helpers in the kitchen, hurrying this way and that with dishes and serving utensils, assisting Dad in preparing food for these weddings, sometimes with a better attitude than other times — it was not my favorite thing!

On the inside, Dad was a softie (something we realized later in life), and we knew Dad would do anything for us, but on the outside, he was reserved, rarely shared his emotions, and spoke only when he really meant it. He was an authoritarian household manager, demanding that things be done just the right way. The age-old principle “children should be seen and not heard” was the household’s dictum — for the girls, anyway. Household objects were to be returned to their proper places, beds were for sleeping, not sitting on, and dust was forbidden from settling on any surface.

My mother, Mary Joan, was more relaxed than my father. She was the “fun one.” Cheerful and lively, she added a bright presence to our home. But she was not a socialite; she devoted herself to the family. She was always there for us kids. Mum was amazing with her hands, always knitting and crocheting to make clothes for us and our dolls. She did some of the cooking, but Dad (as a chef) had his turn, too. But one of the most important things my mother did was to send us children to Sunday school.

It's Just What You Did

My parents didn't attend church. Neither had grown up in a believing household. Even though they weren't believers at the time, my parents did have good old-fashioned morals: no smoking, no drinking, no swearing, and, for my mother at least, children needed to go to Sunday school. Dad thought Sunday school was a "stupid waste of time," but Mother was staunch: children go to Sunday school. It was just "the done thing."

Accordingly, each Sunday morning, I dressed in my Sunday finest and set off to walk to church, clutching my pennies for the offering plate. In those days, no one thought it was odd to see a five-year-old strolling to church on her own or with a gaggle of siblings. It's just what you did.

We (the children) attended Sunnybank Methodist Church, a simple wooden building just down the road. In those post-war years, the Methodist church was active across Australia, with outreach and community building, including evangelistic campaigns and an emphasis on Sunday school attendance. For us, it was just part of our weekly routine. Home, school, and church were the rhythms of my childhood.

Mum sent us to church for Sunday school because, Christian or not, that's what you did. Years later, I realized how important it was that my mother did that. God used it to direct my future and eternity, and I can't praise the Lord enough for it.

The Flannelgraph and a Lightbulb Moment

One Easter Sunday when I was about eleven years old, the Sunday school class met in the back of the church as usual. The autumn sunshine streamed in the windows, and the church was decorated with flowers in preparation for a joyous Easter service.

One of the ladies from the church was tasked with giving an Easter message to the children using felt biblical characters and the classic flannelgraph. I'm sure many children today (including our own

grandchildren) would not understand how Sunday school teachers of the past used a flannelgraph to teach their lessons. One by one, my teacher added Jesus, Roman soldiers, the chief priests, and ultimately a cross followed by an empty tomb, as she explained Jesus dying on the cross and rising again.

A lightbulb came on. I'd surely heard the gospel before at church, but I'm a very visual learner, and something about that simple flannelgraph brought to life the truth of the gospel and Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for me. At that moment I prayed, "Lord, You died on that cross for me. You did that for me, so I want to do whatever You want me to do and go wherever You want me to go." I meant it with all my heart and Jesus saved me. I was born again.

The teacher then asked any of us who had prayed to come forward to talk to her. I have always been incredibly shy, and I was very scared to go up all by myself, so I promised the Lord that if just one other person went up, I'd go too. Well, the Lord must have wanted me to go forward because the whole class got up and went!

In *Miraculous: The Ken Ham and Answers in Genesis Story*, my husband Kenny's (Kenny darling to me, Ken Ham to the rest of the world) book about the history of the Answers in Genesis ministry, he shares that at about ten years of age, he also made a commitment to go wherever God wanted him to go and do whatever God wanted him to do. Little did we know then that God would bring us both together and "take us up" on that commitment!

Learning God Is with Me

Around the same time, I developed a severe pain near my hip. It wasn't immediately obvious what was wrong (some of the doctors believed I was just faking it!), but I was eventually admitted to the hospital in Brisbane.

I was painfully shy — and I still am. People have always scared me. I didn't know which was worse — the pain in my hip or having to stay at a strange hospital with strange people for two weeks!

The doctors bandaged my leg and attached weights to the bottom, hoping that stretching it out would fix the issue. It eventually did, but for two weeks, I lay in a hospital bed. As the sun set every night, the lights on a church up on a hill would come on. I could see that beautiful church through my window, casting its light all around and reminding me every night that God was with me.

He was with me then as a little girl growing up amidst the farms of Queensland, and He's still with me today, through decades of joy and pain, rejoicing and suffering, valleys and mountaintops. And I've needed Him every step of the way.

He Did That for Me

As a little girl, committing my life to the Lord and seeing small reminders of His care for me, I had no idea what He would eventually call me to or do with my life. I'll explore that call and the blessings and struggles of ministry throughout this book, but knowing who God is and what He's done for me has kept me faithful to serve Him all these years.

No matter what God calls you to, a robust theology of who God is will keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, not on your circumstances or trials. So who is God and what did He do for us?

Philippians gives us just a glimpse:

Though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. — Philippians 2:6–8.

Jesus is fully God; He's the God man. His rightful home is the splendid halls of heaven, surrounded by winged seraphim covering their faces and crying:

*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory! — Isaiah 6:3*

These seraphim are accompanied by the four living creatures, likewise breaking out in worship day and night without ceasing,

*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come! — Revelation 4:8*

Jesus is the God of Mt. Sinai, whom the Israelites could not approach because of their sinfulness and His overpowering holiness. He's the God who dwelt in the midst of His people as a pillar of fire and a cloud, housed in a tabernacle overlaid with gold and other precious metals and later in a magnificent temple — but separated from His people by a heavy curtain, veiling His presence from sinful eyes.

He is the God whose power is so fearsome “your enemies come cringing to you” (Psalm 66:3) and the One before whom all the world should stand in awe (Psalm 33:8). The God who is clothed in light (Psalm 104:2), whose robe fills the temple (Isaiah 6:1), who makes the thunderclouds His chariot (Psalm 104:3), and who speaks and it is done (Psalm 33:9). My Kenny darling often challenges people to be like Job and recognize how great God is and how small we are, humbling ourselves before Him.

Yet, think about the fact that God humbled Himself to become one of us. He willingly became a helpless baby, born to “nobody” parents in a small Israelite village. God chose by His own volition to be hungry, weak, tired, overwhelmed, and thirsty. To suffer and be tempted in every way, just as we are. And more than that, our holy, holy, holy God — the God whose face no one could see and live — that God became sin for us.

Jesus became the perfect sacrifice that our sinful actions demanded that we might be forgiven. He became the Lamb, slain before the foundation of the world, the ultimate fulfillment of centuries of

The Power of a Flannelgraph: A Call That Sustains Me

Passover lambs sacrificed over and over again. He was betrayed by one of His friends and handed over to hateful men. He — the Judge of all the universe — was put on trial by weak human judges who, despite His innocence, condemned Him to die. He, the King of kings and Lord of lords, allowed a crown of thorns to be pressed into His brow by taunting sinners He had fearfully and wonderfully knit together in the womb and whose very breath He sustained even as they hurled insults at Him.

Jesus walked up the hill to Calvary, dragging a heavy wooden cross on His bloody, beaten back, ripped raw by a Roman whip. He allowed sinful hands to hammer nails into His hands and feet and permitted His cross to be hoisted into place. He endured agony and separation from His Father before breathing His last. He willingly died. For me, Mally Ham. And this overwhelms me.

If He, who deserves all honor, glory, and praise, did all of that for me, then I, who deserve nothing but death and separation from Him for my sin, could do anything for Him. And that has always been my commitment to our God. Is it your commitment, too?

There is no sugarcoating the harsh realities of serving the Lord in a sin-cursed world. Jesus said in John 15:20:

“Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”

Jesus was betrayed. We will be betrayed. Jesus was hated without cause. We will be hated without cause. Jesus was insulted and humiliated. We will be insulted and humiliated. Jesus was persecuted. We will be persecuted. We are servants, and we are not greater than our Master. Just as He suffered in this sinful world, we will suffer. It is just as Jesus said, that “in this world we will have trouble” (John 16:33).

And believe me, Kenny has been attacked in all these ways and more. When he faces opposition, then I am too, because we are

one in marriage. When he's attacked, he knows I share his burden and will do all I can to help him struggle through it. I can do this because of my commitment first to the Lord and then to my hubby in marriage. If I think Kenny might be wrong in his thinking, I will gently ask him questions and offer Scripture to help him. I've learned I'm here to be a counselor to my husband, our children, and now our grandchildren as well. I love being able to help them based on what God's Word teaches and from my years of experience dealing with the ups and downs of life.

It's tempting to enter ministry with rose-colored glasses, believing things will be easy or that we will receive accolades because of what we're doing for the Kingdom of God, but that's not the reality of serving Christ in a sinful world. The truth is we will sin, and others will sin against us. It will be hard. We will experience times of joy, encouragement, and refreshment, but also valleys of humiliation and battles with Apollyon and Giant Despair (two characters representing spiritual warfare and discouragement in John Bunyan's book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*). In seasons where both Kenny and I were both somewhat depressed, he would say, "Lord, thank You for the mountaintops and valleys you've taken us through, but couldn't we just have a little hill right now?" Nevertheless, we keep walking out our faith through those valleys.

What sustains the call during these times?

The gospel.

Life Is Like a Bed of Roses

If we look at our circumstances and spiral into self-pity, we will not remain steadfast in our calling. Like Peter, who sank in the waves because he took his eyes off Christ, we will pack up our bags, go home, and become ineffective. The only way we can remain steadfast is by keeping our eyes on Jesus.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. — Hebrews 12:1–2

We must speak truth to ourselves:

- ☞ Is this thing really too hard for me to do when I think about what Jesus did for me?
- ☞ Is it really too hard for me to continue supporting Kenny darling, whom I absolutely adore, when God has called us to this task together?

The answers should be no. Nothing is too hard when we think about what Jesus has done for us. So we fight the good fight (1 Timothy 6:12), we press on (Philippians 3:14), we run (Hebrews 12:1), we discipline our bodies and keep them under control (1 Corinthians 9:27), all in pursuit of the prize that God promises for those who love Him and are faithful to His calling.

It's been said that "life is like a bed of roses," and in some ways, that adage is true. Amid the beauty and sweetness of the roses, there are many thorns to avoid. Don't get caught on the thorns. Keep reading God's Word, crying out to Him in prayer, seeking encouragement from fellow believers, singing great songs of the faith, and rehearsing the gospel and the truth of what Jesus has done for you. These spiritual disciplines, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will sustain you.

The bottom line is this: If Christ did that for me, I can go anywhere and do anything for Him.

But I Meant It

Together, Kenny and I have served the Lord in ministry for over fifty years. There have been many seasons, some in the distant past and some much more recent, when I've wanted to give up, retire like a "normal" couple, and hand over the stresses and trials of ministry to someone else. But the Lord hasn't allowed that to happen yet. And because I made a commitment to the Lord, I could never allow myself to go back on the promise I made to Him as a young girl.

That promise I made to the Lord as an eleven-year-old child has sustained me through it all. When I wearily cry out to Him, "Lord, I can't do this anymore. I'm tired," He gently reminds me, "Mally, you promised." Sometimes I've replied, "Lord, I was a kid!" and His answer has always been, "But you meant it."

I did mean it then and I still mean it today. Because Christ was willing to go to the cross for me, I will go anywhere and do anything for Him. I fervently believe that is a commitment we should all have when we trust in Christ.